WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub a 1.   A master scheduler arranged to control a near-video-on-demand (NVOD) system, the master scheduler comprising:

a schedule management system arranged to receive and

5   validate a schedule; and

a content manager system arranged to monitor and control the loading of assets into a video server according to the validated schedule, wherein the assets include video content scheduled for staggered transmission to subscribers of the NVOD system using a plurality of channels.

2.   The master scheduler of claim 1 further comprising:

a management processor including a graphic user interface (GUI), responsive to GUI-based commands from an administrator, arranged to interact with the content manager system to control the loading of the assets.

3.   The master scheduler of claim 1 further comprising:

a schedule distributor arranged to distribute a

20   finalized schedule of programming events to external entities of the NVOD system, including the video server;

wherein the schedule management system, responsive to commands from an administrator, modifies the validated schedule to generate the finalized schedule of programming events.

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4.   The master scheduler of claim 1 further comprising:

a head-end configuration manager, responsive to commands from an administrator, arranged to track configuration parameters of a head-end of the NVOD system, wherein the configuration parameters determine NVOD channel allocations.

5.   The master scheduler of claim 1 further comprising:

a task management system arranged to generate an indication of tasks to be performed to conduct the loading of assets to the video server.

6.   The master scheduler of claim 5 further comprising:

a notification generator, responsive to the occurrence of conditions associated with generated tasks, arranged to generate notifications of the conditions.

7.   The master scheduler of claim 1 further comprising:

an asset management system arranged to monitor the status and conditions of assets in the NVOD system.

5   8.   The master scheduler of claim 7 further comprising:

a graphic user interface (GUI) arranged to generate an asset management screen to allow an administrator to. access the asset management system for viewing asset-related data.

9.   The master scheduler of claim 1 wherein the plurality of channels includes a test channel dedicated for testing a selected asset; and

wherein the content manager system includes a graphic user interface to allow an administrator to view the selected asset using the test channel to verify the integrity of the selected asset loaded into the video server.

10.   A near-video-on-demand (NVOD) system arranged to provide video content to a plurality of subscribers, the NVOD
20   system comprising:

a video server arranged to store the content in a memory;

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a head-end arranged to distribute the content from the video server to the plurality of subscribers over a plurality of channels using staggered transmission of the content;

an electronic program guide (EPG) provider system;

5   a business support system;

a management processor including a graphic user interface (GUI) to allow an administrator to monitor and control the content of the video server; and

a master scheduler including:

a schedule management system arranged to receive and validate a schedule from a schedule provider, and being responsive to commands from an administrator for processing the validated schedule to generate a finalized schedule of programming events;

a schedule distributor arranged to distribute a finalized schedule of programming events to the video server, the EPG provider system, and the business support system; and

a content manager arranged to monitor and control the loading of assets into the video server according to the

20   ~~finalized schedule.~~

11.   The NVOD system of claim 10 wherein the master scheduler includes:

a head-end configuration manager, responsive to

commands from the administrator, arranged to track configuration

parameters of the head-end to determine NVOD channel allocations.

5   12. The NVOD system of claim 10 wherein the master

scheduler includes:

a task management system arranged to generate an

indication of tasks to be performed to conduct the loading and

unloading of assets to the video server.

13. The NVOD system of claim 12 wherein the master

scheduler includes:

a notification generator, responsive to the occurrence

of conditions associated with generated tasks, arranged to notify

15   the administrator of the conditions.

14. The NVOD system of claim 10 wherein the master

scheduler includes:

an asset management system arranged to monitor the

20   status and conditions of the assets.

15. The NVOD system of claim 14 wherein the management

processor generates an asset management screen on the GUI to

allow an administrator to access the asset management system for viewing asset-related data.

16.   The NVOD system of claim 10 wherein the plurality of

5   channels includes a test channel dedicated to test an asset; and
     wherein the content manager generates a content
management screen on the GUI to allow an administrator to select
and view the selected asset to verify the integrity of the
selected asset loaded into the video server.

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17.   A method for controlling a near-video-on-demand (NVOD)
system, the method comprising the steps of:
     receiving a schedule from a schedule provider;
     validating the schedule;
     processing the schedule to generate a finalized
15 schedule;
     receiving assets including content;
     loading the assets into a video server according to the
finalized schedule;

20   distributing the finalized schedule to the video
server, to a business support system, and to an electronic
program guide system; and
     transmitting the content using staggered transmission
over a plurality of channels to subscribers of the NVOD system.

18.   The method of claim 17 wherein the step of receiving

assets includes the step of:

      cataloging the received assets using an asset

management system.

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19.   The method of claim 17 further comprising the step of:

      generating a graphic user interface (GUI) screen to

allow an administrator to monitor the loading of the assets into

the video server.

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20.   The method of claim 19 further comprising the steps of:

      receiving an asset selection command through the GUI

screen to select an asset loaded into the video server;

      receiving a test actuation signal through the GUI

screen; and

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      sending the asset to a display of an administrator over

a test channel for viewing the selected asset.

21.   A method for validation of scheduling information

20   comprising:

      receiving at a master scheduler said scheduling information

from a schedule provider;

      receiving an asset from an asset provider;

      loading said asset into a video server;

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obtaining asset information from said video server;

comparing said asset information to said scheduling information;

identifying a variance of said asset information to said
5   scheduling information.

22.   The method of claim 21 wherein said step of comparing asset information to said scheduling information comprises:

comparing said asset information comprising measured duration information measured from said asset to said scheduling information comprising stored duration information.

23.   The method of claim 21 wherein said step of comparing asset information to said scheduling information comprises:

obtaining calculated duration information based on a difference between a scheduled start time and a scheduled end time;

comparing said asset information comprising measured duration information measured from said asset to said calculated
20   duration information.

24.   The method of claim 21 wherein said step of comparing asset information to said scheduling information comprises:

comparing said asset information comprising an asset return date to said scheduling information comprising a scheduled play date;

said method further comprising:

5   inhibiting playing of said asset if said scheduled play date is later than said asset return date.

25.   The method of claim 21 further comprising:

receiving at said master scheduler program guide information from a program guide system;

comparing said program guide information to said scheduling information.

26.   The method of claim 21 further comprising:

modifying said scheduling information at said master scheduler to obtain modified scheduling information;

transmitting said modified scheduling information to a program guide system and to a business support system, said program guide system disseminating program guide information and

20   said business support system generating billing information.

27.   The method of claim 21 further comprising:

obtaining pricing information from said asset provider;

modifying said pricing information at said master scheduler to obtain modified pricing information;

transmitting said modified pricing information from said master scheduler to a business support system, said business

5   support system generating billing information.